I have nothing but admiration, both for Mary Alexander's intention of putting this overlooked artist's contribution on record and for the literate, well-researched, informed manner in which she has executed the project. There is no question that it makes a valuable and original contribution.

Howard White

Mary Alexander has retraced Sybil Jacobson's personal and artistic odyssey in Canada's pioneer west with loving care and great attention to accuracy. This fine work is an outstanding cultural legacy for future generations of Canadians.

Bill Davidson
The Burlington Post

Sybil Jacobson
1881 - 1953

Sybil at 25

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SYBIL JACOBSON PAINTING IN THE WEST by Mary G. Alexander H.M.S. PRESS

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Foreword by Kathleen E. Berghorn

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SYBIL JACOBSON
PAINTING IN THE WEST

By Mary G. Alexander

Foreward by Kathleen E. Berghorn

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The Author

Mary Alexander (nee McCallum) was born in Watson, Sask., in 1922. She is a graduate of the Universities of Saskatchewan and British Columbia. In 1950 she married Donald Alexander. After four postings at Canadian Consulates in the United States, the Alexanders returned to Canada in 1979 on a rotational home assignment. Mary took the opportunity to see paintings by Sybil Jacobson in various parts of the country and began her search for information about the artist. The Alexanders are presently residing in Philadelphia, Pa., where Donald is Consul and Trade Commissioner for Canada. Their permanent home is at Gillies Bay, Texada Island, B.C.

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Remembering with joy Donald, Lillian and Peter McCallum

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Rosco E. Long in Lac Vert located Johanna Christy, without whose unstinting co-operation this book could not have been completed. Philip Listoe at the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery gave the right help at the right time. Eileen Thumm undertook important research in Vancouver. Many others cheerfully joined their ranks and offered valuable assistance.

A grant from the Explorations Programme of the Canada Council has made it possible to include photographs of paintings from private collections.

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FOREWORD

As an art historian with a special interest in women artists, I am particularly delighted that a wider public will have an opportunity to become acquainted with the work of Sybil Jacobson through the publication of Sybil Jacobson Painting in the West. This sensitive yet scholarly monograph documenting the life and work of a distinguished but hitherto neglected Canadian painter represents a noteworthy contribution to the growing bibliography of serious studies of women artists which have been published in recent years.

The work of Sybil Jacobson certainly belongs to that "hidden heritage" of women artists who have achieved excellence but remained largely unknown and unrecognized. Painting in the West enlarges our knowledge of women artists by rescuing Jacobson's work from obscurity and offering us an intimate, and often poignant, portrait of an extraordinary woman and a gifted painter. This book, the result of several years of painstaking research and careful documentation, is a valuable addition to out knowledge not only of women artists but of an overlooked aspect of Canadian painting as well.

Although from a purely stylistic point of view it might be noted that Jacobson's later paintings do not fulfill the striking promise of her surviving early work, such an observation misses the significance of this artist's remarkable achievement. Jacobson's real strength as an artist lies in her indomitable spirit and unquenchable need for creative self-expression, which gave her the impetus to go on painting until the end of her life, despite artistic isolation, relative obscurity, financial hardship, and personal tragedy.

As Mary Alexander had rightly pointed out, Sybil Jacobson was not a pioneer of avant-garde artistic movements and innovative ways of interpreting visual reality, as was her much more widely known contemporary Emily Carr. A traditionalist in her artistic style, Jacobson was a pioneer in her own life, and her personal courage and perseverance are the wellspring from which her paintings flow.

Kathleen E. Berghorn
M.A. (Art History),
Northwestern University

Newton, Massachusetts
October 30, 1984

1. Eleanor Tufts, Our Hidden Heritage: Five Centuries of Women Artists (New York: Paddington Press Ltd., 1974).

Introduction

It was in 1981, one hundred years after the birth of Canadian artist Sybil Jacobson in England, that this study of her life was first undertaken. A painting by the artist purchased by my parents in Saskatchewan in 1931 had travelled with our family through a number of moves in Canada and the United States and was enjoyed and appreciated even more with the passing of time. Upon our return to Canada I was anxious to find out more about this remarkable woman whom I had met once very briefly as a child. Sybil had painted in the central, southern and northeastern areas of Saskatchewan for twenty-two years and I knew well some of the woods and lakes she loved to paint, especially the lake at Lac Vert, where she had a studio for a number of years.

Although nine of Sybil's oil paintings are in the permanent collections of the Nutana Collegiate Memorial Art Gallery in Saskatoon, the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery at the University of Regina, and the Moose Jaw Art Museum, it was a surprise and disappointment to find that the brief biographical sketches contained in exhibition catalogues were limited to seventy-five words or less and contained inaccuracies. When mentioned, the year of Sybil's birth was given as 1899 and the year of her death as 1964. We were later able to verify that Sybil was born in London, England on July 29, 1881, and died near Vancouver, B.C., on November 4, 1953.

Sybil's paintings were exhibited at the Memorial Art Gallery in Saskatoon in November, 1926, with those of James Henderson, who is well known for his portraits of prairie Indians and landscapes. Henderson, born in Glasgow in 1871, had come to Canada in 1909, three years before Sybil's arrival in this country. Later, in British Columbia, Sybil exhibited several times in the annual British Columbia Artists' Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery, along with such noted artists as Jock Macdonald, Jack Shadbolt, Maurice Prendergast, B.C. Binning, Emily Carr and Lawren Harris. Nevertheless, Sybil is not mentioned in either A Dictionary of Canadian Artists compiled by Colin S. Macdonald or in the biographical dictionary Creative Canada compiled by the Reference Division, McPherson Library, University of Victoria. Even the Saskatchewan Archives Office and the Saskatchewan Legislative Library have no information about Sybil although their coverage of early Saskatchewan artists is, for the most part, fairly good. It would appear that the work of this artist and her contributions to Canadian cultural life have been overlooked.

When Sybil Jacobson arrived in Saskatchewan in 1912 to take up a homestead with her first husband, Peter Henley, she was the best trained professional woman artist in the province. (Records indicate that Dorothea Sheldon-Williams, a graduate of the Slade School of Art, pursued her painting only as a hobby. Hilda Stewart, who also studied at the Royal Academy Schools and later taught at Regina College and the University of Saskatchewan, did not come to Canada until 1921.) In 1901 Sybil was enrolled at the Hastings & St. Leonards Municipal School of Science and Art in London and was awarded First Prize in Oil Colour. Later she studied at the Lambeth School of Science and Art before attending the Royal Academy Schools for three years. While there one of her principal teachers was the noted portrait artist, John Singer Sargent. She also worked under the direction of Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema, Sir George Clausen, Ernest Crofts, Sir Frank Dicksee and other masters. Then, with her young husband, she studied art in

the artistically charged atmosphere of Paris for several years prior to coming to Canada. (Young Pablo Picasso, also born in 1881, had arrived in Paris in 1900.)

In 1981 it was finally possible to locate Johanna Christy, Sybil's only surviving child. Neither Johanna nor distant relatives contacted in England have any record of where Sybil studied in France. We do know that it was a particularly happy and exciting time of her life and it was there that her first marriage took place.

With Johanna's assistance, more that thirty paintings have been located in private collections. In every instance these paintings have been kept in the families originally making the acquisitions and most have been passed on to the next generation. In response to advertisements placed in Canadian newspapers, two paintings were located in Israel.

This is the story of Sybil Jacobson's accomplishments and continual hardships, and of her courage and determination in recording the beauty of a new land.

1. The Early Years

Sybil Jacobson was born in London, England, in the late Victorian era when art had become affordable to a growing number. The Industrial Revolution had created a new stratum of society, the newly rich. As the industrial landscapes became increasingly more ugly and blighted the prosperous sought beauty in art and were eager to decorate their homes. With the increasing number of art patrons, an artist of great talent might aspire not only to fame and a very comfortable living but even to a knighthood. Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Sir Frederic Leighton, Sir John Everett Millais, Sir Edward J. Poynter and Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema were among the great and respected masters of the English art world.

Municipal art galleries sprang up all over the country and the opportunities for women to study art were greatly increased. The Female School of Design was established in London in 1842, and later was granted royal patronage. The Royal Academy Schools began accepting female applicants in 1862, and the Slade School opened its doors to women in 1871.

By the 1870's, in certain areas, art school training had strong links with local industry. Thus the Lambeth School of Art and Design, which later became absorbed by the Slade School, was located adjacent to Doulton's of Lambeth where art pottery was made. A number of the Lambeth School students and graduates, especially the women, secured employment as designers and decorators there. We are reminded of Sybil's early training at the Lambeth School when we see the beautiful still lifes she painted throughout her life.

Sybil's parents, Edward and Lucy Ann Atkinson, had three daughters and one son. One daughter, Constance, studied music in Germany. Mr Atkinson was a prosperous director of a shipping company and a wine importer. He served on the Council of the Corporation of the City of London at the time the Rt. Hon. R.N. Fowler, M.P., was Lord Mayor. All the children were trained in music, as well as painting, and Sybil became accomplished as a violinist as well as showing much promise in art. Johanna recalls that her mother often spoke of Hastings, and Kent, and it was in Hastings that Mr. Atkinson died in 1900. Mrs. Atkinson died at St. Leonards on Sea in 1906. (Plate 1 - Jacobson as a small child)

It was from this comfortable cultural background that Sybil and her husband arrived in Saskatoon in 1912. They were two dedicated young artists seeking a prairie homestead, unmindful of the difficulties that lay ahead. A photograph of Sybil (taken on her twenty-fifth birthday) had been given to her future husband and was abrought by him to Canada. (Plate 2) Her address on the back of the photo was given as "Dukes" Lane Chambers, Church St., South Kensington, London."

Saskatoon had become a city in 1906 and was selected as the site for the University of Saskatchewan in 1909. The handsome limestone buildings would soon rise on the campus bordering the South Saskatchewan River. In 1912, at the height of the boom which began in 1910, the population exceeded 16,000.

Years later (August 30, 1925) Sybil wrote from Wynyard, Saskatchewan, to Mr A.W. Cameron, President of the Saskatoon Art Club and Principal of Nutana Collegiate Institute:

I left England (London) in 1912, and my residence (for a time) was Saskatoon. I saw then that this country was too 'new' to appreciate it (art) at that time, but I was not discouraged and continued to add to my own collection of pictures with a view to 'one day' exhibiting them in

Saskatoon.

One might wonder if Sybil would have faced fewer obstacles in the pursuit of her artistic career had she chosen to settle in Winnipeg. It was in 1912 that the Winnipeg Art Gallery opened its doors in Manitoba, which had been created a province in 1870. Like the Art Gallery of Ontario, which was established in 1900, the Winnipeg Art Gallery provided a strong and positive impetus to artistic development from its very inception. Meanwhile, in the newer province of Saskatchewan, which received its provincial charter in 1905, it was nearly fifty years before the University of Saskatchewan established the Gordon Snelgrove Art Gallery in Saskatoon, and the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery at the University of Regina was not established until 1954.

A Canadian writer, Valerie Casselton, has recently described Saskatchewan as "the land of plenty, with depression and want in its history and beauty in its face." Sybil experienced to the full both the beauty and want in this new province, where she remained for more than twenty years.

After a relatively short stay in Saskatoon, Sybil and peter Henley left to take up farming in Saskatchewan - an undertaking which ended in great misfortune. Little is known of Peter Henley, except that he had become estranged from his prominent English family, and that he was a sculptor as well as painter. One might wonder if he was a remittance man, as their efforts at farming were not successful and yet there seemed to be money for the relative luxury of art supplies. Sybil and Peter had first met in Paris. Peter tilled the soil by hand and they tried to raise livestock, with poor results. They made pets of their two cows and one pig, and, during the rigorous Saskatchewan winter, they shared their living quarters with a variety of ailing animals. Nevertheless, they both found time to pursue their art.

They had not been long in Canada when tragedy struck and Peter suddenly became violent. Johanna relates:

Mother came back home from the town with some supplies when peter confronted her, wildly and murderously insane. He launched a flying attack on her, bore her down to the floor and choked her savagely. The only thing that stopped him from finishing his attack was the sudden breaking of her beads, which flew all over, rolling noisily across the floor. Peter seemed to come to himself for a moment. As Mum once said, "He had such a bewildered look on his face - then it twisted again." So she lunged up, and ran out of the room. When he came after her (she had hidden just inside the door of the small adjoining room) she slipped out and ran, terrified and dishevelled, to a neighbor. The doctor was notified. There were no phones but before too long the doctor and some of the curious local people when out to the farm to see what was happening. It took several men to subdue Peter. He was manic and was committed to hospital, where I understand he died not too long afterward, still violently insane.

Mum had the terrible habit of almost literally burning her bridges behind her. She burned everything that reminded her of the tragic life she had shared with Peter.

We cannot determine the exact date of this incident. The Battleford Mental Hospital was established in Saskatchewan on February 4, 1914, and the hospital records are confidential. The Office of Vital Statistics of the Province of Saskatchewan had made a search of their records from 1912 to 1928, inclusive, and no record of the death of Peter Henley has been found. (Prior to the opening of the hospital in Battleford, mental patients were sent for treatment from

Saskatchewan to the Province of Manitoba where facilities for the care of the mentally ill were already in operation. The provincial Office of Vital Statistics in Winnipeg requires written permission from a family member before a search of their records can be made.) It would seem to be quite possible that Peter Henley became ill during the couple's first or second winter on their Saskatchewan farm and that he died in Manitoba.

It has also not been possible to ascertain where the Henleys attempted to farm. The Saskatchewan Archives Board was unable to find any reference to Peter Henleys attempted to farm. The Saskatchewan Archives Board was unable to find any reference to Peter Henley in their Homestead files, which document only the original owners of the land. We may assume, therefore, that Peter was able to purchase farm land from one of the original settlers.

Sybil would not have agreed with the thoughts expressed in the perm "American History," by W.R. Moses: "Though hail, tornado, or the cow in the kitchen garden / Could so disappoint as to make the heart freeze, / Those were their finest years, the first on the prairie."`

2. Rural Saskatchewan

Before the sudden onset of Peter Henley's violent behavior, the young couple had already faced disappointments and some disillusionment. Sybil's daughter recalls her mother reciting a poem of Peter's:

Don't live in the past;
It is over and done with now.
The joys didn't last,
And all our schemes
Seem dreams somehow.

When Johanna and her brother were old enough to have an interest in their mother's youthful experiences, Sybil was not reluctant to discuss them. However, there was little embellishment of the facts. She had put the past behind her and never indulged in self-pity. It has been all the more difficult, therefore, to reconstruct the time between Peter Henley's committal to hospital and Sybil's meeting with Dr. Johann Jacobson. We know that Sybil's brother, Stanley Atkinson, emigrated to Canada and lived for a time in eastern Saskatchewan. Fortunately, he was not too far away and was able to give some comfort to his sister when she was left alone, seemingly amidst alien corn, so far from England.

Johanna has wondered if the doctor called out to that medical emergency on the farm might have been her father. If so, was he drawn to the beautiful English lady in need of help and did Sybil come to rely upon the doctor's strength and concern? Time has already drawn a veil across those few years prior to 1918. The records of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Saskatchewan are incomplete up until 1930 and it has not been possible to determine where Dr. Jacobson was engaged in medical practice at the time he met Sybil.

Dr. Jacobson was a handsome, blue-eyed physician in his forties, a married man with a son and a daughter. He was born in 1870 in Iceland, where his father was a hotel-keeper. As a small child, Dr. Jacobson emigrated with his family to Gimli, Manitoba. This was in the early 1870's when many Icelandic settlers arrived in that community. He received his medical training in the Chicago area where he found employment in a meat packing plant in order to pay his educational expenses. We do not know whether his first marriage took place in the United States or in Canada, nor do we know the maiden or given names of his first wife.

Was Dr. Jacobson's first marriage already in some difficulty when he met Sybil? Was his problem with alcohol, so delicately handled by Sybil in later years, perhaps a negative factor in this earlier marriage? We do know that he loved the children born of this union and that he maintained a good relationship with them for the rest of his life, although he was unable to see them frequently.

Johanna recalls her half-brother as a fine houng man who visited her family years later in Lac Vert, Sask. This visit seemed a happy one, cordial and without strain on the part of anyone. We can imagine, however, that the abandoned wife may have felt bitterness. She subsequently moved with her children to Winnipeg. Dr. Jacobson, to the extent that he was able, undertook to send contributions for the support of that family as long as there was a need. In this undertaking

he had the fullest support of Sybil, the woman he was to love and admire for the rest of his life.

Dr. Jacobson and Sybil left together for Minot, North Dakota, in 1918. In those days it would have been particularly scandalous for a doctor to take up his life with another woman in a town where he had been practicing. At this time both their careers (medicine and art) were sublimated because of their intense desire to be together.

In Minot, Dr. Jacobson had to earn his living away from the profession of medicine as he was not licensed to practice in North Dakota. It was because of the realization of the added responsibilities a child would bring that the couple decided to return to Saskatchewan where Dr. Jacobson could again take up medicine.

Johanna was born in Jansen, Sask., in 1919. She remembers her early being spent in Wynyard, Sask., where she started school. A healthy, precocious child, she began to read at the age of three. She skipped grades and by the time she was twelve she was in Grade 9 at St. Chad's School for Girls in Regina.

Johanna's brother, Jacob (known as Tiggi), was born in 1921. He was premature and it was a very difficult birth. Dr. Jacobson was delivering another baby some distance away when, unknown to him, Sybil's labor began. She began to haemorrhage and it was the skill of a wonderful Scottish nurse, Miss MacKenzie, that saved both mother and child. The nurse took the tiny baby home with her in a shoe box, put the box in the warming over of her old-fashioned iron cook stove, and fed him with an eye dropper. Tiggi remained delicate during his early years but he was a robust young man when he enlisted in the Canadian Army in 1940.

After Tiggi's birth Sybil was very weak for some time and she also suffered from a crippling bout of arthritis. This was to bother her frequently for the rest of her life. Her hands were deformed as far back as Johanna can remember. They were, nevertheless, clever hands that would do the artist's bidding and Johanna recalls the lovely almond-shaped fingernails that stood out in contrast to the somewhat crooked fingers.

Johanna and her brother were never placed in the position of being regarded as children whose parents were not legally husband and wife. It would seem that in every community in which they lived there had been no reason to assume that the parents were not married. It is likely, however, that Sybil would be privately criticized by a few of her neighbors in the small towns and villages in which they resided for leaving Johanna and Tiggi with Dr. Jacobson for long periods of time in order to paint outdoors, directly from nature. This ;may also have been of some embarrassment to Dr. Jacobson.

At that time the only other professional women in those communities would be nurses and teachers. Although there were a few female doctors on the prairies in the 1920's, they were not known to the Jacobson's neighbors and women had barely started to enter the other professions. After marriage, women who where teachers and nurses could frequently obtain occasional employment in their own districts as substitute teachers or private nurses. Normal Scholl training took just one year and nurses' training took four years in a qualified teaching hospital. It would be difficult for many of these prairie women to conceive of an artist being a professional person rather than just a hobbyist and they might have little conception of the many years of artistic training which Sybil had acquired in highly competitive schools of art in England and France.

A former resident of Jansen in the 1920's remembers it as "an ugly little prairie town with

two walks - one to the nuisance grounds (garbage dump) and one to the cemetery." Sybil, too, felt keenly the lack of natural beauty in some of the newly-founded, small Saskatchewan settlements. When se read the novel Main Street by Sinclair Lewis (which was first published in 1920), the book made a great impression on her. She closely identified with Lewis's heroine. Carol Milford, who, when she married Dr. Will Kennicott, hoped to bring culture to the drab town of Gopher Prairier. Perhaps more readily than the protagonist in the novel Sybil for the most part accepted the esthetic limitations of her environment. Later she would build a studio on the shore of the beautiful lake, Lac Vert Nord, on the edge of the village of Lac Vert. It was in those lovely, natural surroundings that she spent the happiest years of her life in Canada.

In the 1920's the smaller communities in Saskatchewan were without libraries and there were few books in the Jacobson home. The book shelf did contain, however, the ten volume American edition of John L. Stoddard's Lectures, published in 1914, and the children received books every Christmas from their aunts in England.

Sybil had learned to speak French fluently in Europe and in her early years she played violin with considerable skill. Johanna remembers her mother playing from memory, her thoughts seeming very far away and occasionally a tear rolling down her cheek. Sometimes the melodies sounded sorrowful even to Johanna's young ears and seemed to express emotions of isolation and loneliness. Johanna thinks that the violin was probably sold to purchase lumber during their years in Lac Vert.

Late in the autumn of 1925 Sybil moved with the two children to Saskatoon and rented accommodation in which she could teach art. On August 30 she had written from Wynyard to Mr. Cameron: "Unless you have already selected teachers before you receive my letter, I would gladly come up and consult you, bringing a few of my sketches with me." In subsequent correspondence with Mr. Cameron in October she asked his advice on a number of matters concerning the opening of a studio in the city. Her plans did not work out as she had hoped. Dr. Jacobson's sister looked after Johanna and Tiggi in their Saskatoon apartment when Sybil was teaching and the children were unhappy with their aunt. Then Johanna became very ill and was a long time convalescing. Johanna remembers a doctor coming to examine her when she was weak and had difficulty in swallowing. Sybil then decided to give up her teaching in Saskatoon, and to postpone for a further period of time her return to a larger community where greater artistic opportunities existed. By January, 1926, the Jacobson family was living in a rented house at Lac Vert, where Dr. Jacobson for a time had an office.

On January 26, 1926, Sybil wrote from Lac Vert to Mr. Cameron, "This place is extraordinarily beautiful." On February 15 she wrote, "There are most beautiful lakes all around and the big timber, a few miles out, supplies all the dignity to a landscape that one could desire."

On February 26 she wrote:

It is my intention to build a cottage-studio on the beach opposite our drug store. A very large single room, suitable for painting in, as I want to accommodate several students this summer for outdoor sketching and camping.

I was glad to receive the cheque for the portrait (Reverie) and have started building as far as contract plans and materials. As soon as the snow goes I shall have it up in no time. The lake and big timber are right opposite us - you could throw a stone into it easily, and the sunsets over it, with the bush in the background, are glorious.

Not every highway map of Saskatchewan will show Lac Vert Nord, but a topographical map reveals the many small lakes in the area. Lac Vert Nord is less than two miles long. A short distance to the south is a smaller lake, also called "Lac Vert," and it is believed that the two lakes are connected by underground springs. Sybil probably knew Lake Edward well, as it is only a few miles east of Naicam and already was a popular spot for picnics and camping in he 1920's and 1930's. The road to Lake Edward was fairly good but Lake Charron, now a Regional Park, was less accessible.

On March 12 she wrote":

The lumber has been drawn for my studio, and they are starting on it immediately. I tried to arrange for deferred payments, but would like to be able to give them some more soon. I gave them the $40.00 (partial payment from the Memorial Art Gallery Collection Committee for the painting Reverie) right away, to create a favourable impression. I know you'll understand I am anxious to do my best, for that means I shall get my studio quicker.

That summer Sybil had several art students come from larger centres for instruction. In October, at summer's end, she and the children were living i Margo, Sask., where Dr. Jacobson had moved his practice.

Correspondence with Mr. Cameron reveals that Sybil had been successful in selling two paintings to the Memorial Art Gallery at the Nutana Collegiate Institute. This collection was begun after World War 1 to

Honor the memories of former students who had been killed in action. After the exhibition there in October, 1925 , the Gallery purchased Reverie (Plate 4) for $100.00 and in the same year purchased Early Morning (Plate 5) for $70.00. Sybil, in her correspondence with Mr. Cameron, referred to the painting Reverie as "Aldis" and "Aldys." In an undated letter she described this portrait as "depicting a young girl of Icelandic nationality. The Viking type is portrayed in features and colouring, especially the flaxen hair one invariably associates with those Northern races."

The model for this portrait was Aldis Swainson from Wynyard. This beautiful young woman later moved to California. In the early 1950's her husband was in Saskatoon and offered to purchase the portrait for $30,000.00. However, the portrait was not for sale as it had been purchased by the Collection Committee in memory of Nelson Victor Emery. Sybil never knew of the sum offered for this painting. She doubtless would have been dumbfounded.

The skillful handling of light is nowhere more evident in Sybil's work than in Reverie and Early Morning. In the former the light shines at an interesting angle, from upper centre downward to slightly left of centre, paralleling the beautiful braid of hair, which is partly in shadow, and highlighting the model's left cheek. In Early Morning one feels the clear, cool light of early morning and the shadows provide a startling contrast.

The wooden frame that Sybil used for Reverie is described in her letter dated September 24, 1925, to Mr. Cameron. "The very large frame is unique in its way, because it was carved entirely with a rough chisel, a jack-knife and a nail. I made it myself one winter absolutely alone on the Prairie, out of floor scantling," This suggest that Jacobson remained alone for a time on the Henley farm after Peter Henley's hospitalization.

Early Morning is a scene painted on the Henley farm early in the second decade of this century. Sybil described the stooks of grain as "casting strong shadows." Close observation

shows that the sheaves are scythe-cut and hand-tied.

Margo, March 30,1927: "I am returning to Lac Vert, and intend to spend a long year's painting, which a future show in Saskatoon will benefit by. It has been a terrible winter with much sickness in my own family."

April 26, 1927: "Digging into work already for the place seems more beautiful than ever."

A letter dated October 18,1927, to Mr. Cameron shows that the Jacobson family had recently moved to Invermay, Sask., and indicates Sybil's enthusiasm and persistence:

I have 2 large portrait studies that I know you'll long to have in the Memorial collection & one of them "The Spinning Wheel" is a study that was due almost entirely to a most unusual type of personality I was able to paint. Had I room on the frame I intended to include some lines from Gustzv Froeding: "Life from her cheeks had stol'n lnes had worn; Even the withered lips wer folded fast, As if to guard a secret of the past."

My model for this picture has a wonderful face and I was lucky enough to catch the feeling in my portrait. (Plate 6).

Sybil sold The Spinning Wheel at the Regina Exhibition in November, 1927, to the Regina Council of Women and this painting hung for a time in the Regina Public Library. It is now in the permanent collection of the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery. Later, she used the same model for the portrait Supplication (Plate 7), which is also in the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery collection. This painting provides one of the few examples we have of Sybil experimenting and modifying her technique. Unlike her usual more delicate and natural style, in Supplication she has used broader brush strokes, laid on more paint and the colors chosen give a rather unnatural hue to the skin tones.

These two paintings are intelligently forceful works and, in their sympathetic portrayal, may be indebted to recollections of the work of Vincent van Gogh. In the first years of the twentieth century, exhibitions in Paris had drawn attention to van Gogh's paintings, and Sybil Jacobson may have had an opportunity to view his original work. Then , just a short time before she left England for Canada, Walter Sickert and the artists surrounding him had become interested in van Gogh's contribution to art.

During 1928 there appears to have been no further correspondence with Mr. Cameron as he was no longer responsible for arranging exhibitions at the Memorial Art Gallery. Then, on January 22, 1919, Sybil wrote to him again from Lac Vert, asking for his help.

I hope you have not completely forgotten Mrs. Jacobson, the artist.

I have been slightly out of touch with Saskatoon recently, partly owing to home troubles.

Dr. Jacobson's eyes failed him some time ago, one going altogether sightless, and total blindness seemed imminent. He was sent down to Rochester, and after an absence of 5 1/2 weeks and many operations has returned, but litter better.

This has been a great worry to me and has proved a heavy burden, for my 2 children are so young and my husband's many sicknesses have made life a harder struggle financially.

I tried Regina as a new ground for my Art and found an amazingly successful field there. Last year (1927) The Local Council of Women purchased one of my largest pictures "The Spinning Wheel" which you may remember - and it now hangs in their collection at the Public Library.

But the occasional sale of a painting is an uncertain method of a living and I am going to

try and build up something more definite.

This brings me to the point of my letter. I intend applying to Dr. Stapleford of Regina College for a position and I want you to do me the great, great kindness of writing to him - to the effect that I have intimated to you my intention of applying for a position as Art Instructor - and then to give him your own

Opinion of me as an Artist, an exponent and teacher of Art and lastly as a personality. Altho' you did not actually see me teach you knew many who attended my classes in Saskatoon that winter. Ethel Thorpe was one of my best pupils and she carried off first prize at Saskatoon Fair afterwards. Boys from Normal gave up their Saturday afternoons gladly to attend .... Then couldn't you comment upon my 2 pictures purchased by the Memorial Collection?

Mr. Cameron, sometimes there comes into the lives of all of us a time when we need a helping hand stretched out. Such a moment has come to me. With my husband's failing and all the burden falling on my shoulders I want oh so much to climb somewhere secure; - and if your letter of recommendation to Dr. Stapleford could help me to this position, I feel sure from the bottom of my heart that you will write it for me. So that I might not only help myself, my husband and children, but perhaps many, many others besides.

From Sybil's letter and from Mr. Cameron's complimentary letter of recommendation it would appear that there may not even have been a vacancy on the Regina College staff.

Mr. Cameron's letter of January 28. 1919, to Dr. Stapleford, Principal of Regina College, clearly shows Mr. Cameron's respect for Sybil, both as an artist and as a teacher.

I have received a letter from Mrs. Jacobson of Lac Vert, in which she expresses her intention of applying to you for a position as Art Instructor on your staff. I do not knkow whether Mr. Lee-Grayson is on your staff at present or not, but if there is any vacancy, I should like to recomment Mrs. Jacobson to your favorable consideration.

I have known her for some years. She has been associated slightly with our Art Club here and has contributed toward our Exhibitions. We have two very fine paintings of hers in our Memorial collection. I know that she has received excellent training in London and Paris. She seems to understand Art very well indeed and has the faculty of imparting her knowledge in a pleasing way to others. She is an excellent teacher of Art, and ehr pupils have done excellent work. Her husband is a medical doctor, but has nearly lost his eyesight, and the burden of supporting the family is now resting upon Mrs. Jacobson. If you have an opening on your staff for a person of her qualifications, I very strongly endorse her application.

Unfortunately, Sybil did not obtain a teaching position at that time.

Johanna remembers many idyllic times when living on the lakeshore at Lac Vert before her father's approaching blindness became a cause for so much anxiety. Carpenters completed the framing of the studio, named "Corner Porch," but much of the remaining work to be done was completed by Sybil herself. Johanna, Tiggi and their mother thought nothing of walking six miles on a fine day to the lumber yard in Naicam and carrying back on their shoulders a small load of lumber, chatting happily all the way.

One time Sybil was up shingling the roof, wearing Dr. Jacobson's long underwear in place of overalls, when the Anglican Bishop of the Diocese drove up with some friends. He had come from Saskatoon. Jacobson never lost her poise, not even then! The local Anglican minister, Mr. Hussey, helped to build the staircase and the balcony where the family slept.

Johanna writes:

I vividly remember how the shingled house came to be painted. We children did live a sort of fairy-tale life. Mum talked over possible colours with us, saying she would like soft, muted shades that wouldn't clash with the trees - she liked the woodsy, private feeling. Accordingly, the house was in shades of coral, turquoise, green, yellow and mauve! No-one told us what to paint - we were to use our own judgement as to where to use the various colours as long as the effect was soft and attractive. Can you imagine the sheer joy and challenge of such an experience!

Mum liked privacy. At Lac Vert everyone would use our trail to get to the beach. The constant back and forth past the windows, over flower beds and by the small windmill she built was distracting so she built a stile about 200 years away which everyone was happy to use after that.

Johanna relates other gentle flashbacks about her parents:

Coming home across the railway tracks that separated home and the lake from town, my brother and I saw Mum and Cad coming to meet us, walking slowly, obviously very content. She was carrying a huge bunch of Michaelmas daisies. Dad had picked them for her - it was her birthday.

Mum was terrified of the old-fashioned gas lamps. (You recall the ones with mantles and globes that gave an excellent light.) Sometimes they would flare up, hissing, and one of my earlier memories of her hasty exit from the house when she would put the flaring lamp on the ground, all the while calling, "Oh, Jakes!" We always knew what it meant.

Again, Johanna reminisces:

When Mum was painting i the house and we were small she had a marvelous way of keeping us occupied. She would wrap small gifts (a bead, a button, a candy or thimble, etc.) in tiny parcels and tie them with little bows. Then she made a pile of them on the main floor. Tig and I would have long strings with bent hairpins on the ends and we'd lie on our stomachs up in the balcony and "fish" through the carved balustrade for hours.

Then Mum would stop, clean her brushes, put things away, stand back to examine her work and shay, "Shall we have some tea?" It was always fun to decide what we would have. We had no icebox, just a hole in the ground with a screen on top, where the milk and butter kept cool, so we shopped daily. And always there was the smell of turpentine!

There was an upstairs window that opened outwards and every year a robin built its nest in a specially-made bird house that Mum built. The first year, the robin simply used the window sill, making it impossible to open the window. Mum therefore made the little house and carefully transferred the nest into it. The birds liked it so much they came back every year. It had the added advantage of letting us watch the complete cycle of nesting. If one held a mirror just out from the window the whole nest could be plainly seen.

When Johanna and Tiggi were small they were always enthralled to hear the story about their mother actually eating ants in Paris. Sybil had been eating figs with absent-minded pleasure on the banks of the Seine while she was painting a bridge in late afternoon sunlight. When she came to the last bite of fruit she suddenly realized the fig had been full of little insects!

Johanna remembers in their home in her early childhood lovely scenes painted in France. Unfortunately, many of these were later painted over when her mother could not afford to buy

new canvas. Johanna particular recalls a scene of Pont Neuf in Paris. The arches were quite dark and there was a delicate reflection in the water of the colors on the bank, making the painting appear "very liquid and mysterious."

Johanna remembers her mother as a very wise and controlled parent who never raised her voice, and also as a very good friend. "She gave us such a love of beauty and joy in life." The children felt they lived in the best of all possible worlds. However, when Sybil was not pleased the children knew it by her rather distant, blue-eyed stare of disapproval.

There was one point about which Sybil was very firm. Johanna and Tiggi must always be absolutely honest. Once Johanna coveted a miniature brass kettle and succumbed to the temptation to steal it from a playmate. Johanna vividly recalls literally being dragged along a street one snowy night in Margo and Sybil telling the playmate's mother that Johanna had something to confess.

Sybil may at times have set very firm standards for people outside her family, as well. On January 23, 1927, she wrote to Mr. Cameron from Margo concerning a man who had failed to purchase a painting he had commissioned. "When once I am disappointed in any one, it is final."

Before Johanna was yet a teen-ager she read an article in Chatelaine magazine about an eighteen year old Vancouver girl who hitchhiked and rode the rails across Canada. Johanna became almost obsessed about having the same adventure.

Never once did Mum discourage me. She let me discuss innumerable details, even up to the night before I planned to leave. I had even set the alarm. Mum never said, "No, you can't go, you're too young." Then the final morning came and I lay there looking up at the peaked roof, realizing that I would be away from home, alone, perhaps ever afraid. I continued to watch the time go by. Finally Mum turned over (we slept dormitory fashion, all in a row) and asked, "Aren't you going, Do-Do?" I told her I had changed my mind. She climbed out of bed and hugged me. "Thank God!" I was praying you would realize how very difficult and challenging such a journey would be, even for an adult."

Co-incidentally, when Johanna grew up she met Paul Twyford, the brother of the girl who rode the rails. Johanna and Paul were married and lived happily until Paul died just before their fortieth wedding anniversary.

One year, when Sybil stayed all winter with the children at Lac Vert, the barber's wife became the subject of a large portrait. She was a handsome woman with prematurely white hair. For Sybil it was an exercise of pure enjoyment, as well as painterly discipline, and she loved painting the satin, the ostrich feathers and the jewellery. Later, the portrait was prominently displayed in her studio in Winnipeg. It was too large to hang in most homes and eventually it was rolled in a tube and stored for safe-keeping in someone's basement in Deep Cove, near North Vancouver.

Unlike, Emily Carr, who was also working in comparative isolation, Sybil enjoyed participating in social events. As Doris Shadbolt has pointed out, Carr felt uncomfortable in "the society whose demands for conventional decorum she detested." Both Sybil and Dr. Jacobson took an active part in community activities.

Another project that Sybil undertook in Lac Vert was to teach bridge in a formal party atmosphere to the village teen-agers. Jacobson's neighbors, Mr. And Mrs. Austin Hewitt, also had a daughter and a son. Mr. Hewitt was the C.P.R. station agent and they were devoted and

conscientious parents. They began a weekly session of dance instruction for the village young people, using the relatively uncluttered space of the station waiting room for a dance floor. Those evenings were quite successful and Sybil wanted to do her part, as well. There were six girls and six boys at the evening bridge lessons. The flickering lamplight created its own party magic. The girls wore long dresses and everyone behaved well and had a good time.

In any community in which Sybil lived she might be called upon to create an original costume for a school play or pageant. Whether a folk costume was required, or even a crocus or a tiger lily, her artistic imagination served her well. She sewed beautifully, always by hand. Her embroidery work was exquisite and she was also a skilled wood carver. One year she carved a beautiful pine bench and she sometimes embellished her picture frames with intricate carving.. Sybil also made striking rag rugs in beautiful colors and designs and gave them to friends.

On more than one occasion Sybil made a unique costume for herself. At a costume dance held in Jansen's town hall she attended as the Egyptian queen, Nefertiti. With tall, gilded headdress, long, slim dress and eyes edged with kohl, she looked stunning. This gathering showed how she could enter into social events with zest. It also demonstrated her ability to rescue an awkward situation.

That evening an intoxicated man, the town's ne'er-do-well, made an obvious little game of stalking Sybil around the dance floor. Finally, standing behind her, he placed on the top of her headdress a real and rather messy bird nest which had been part of his costume. Laughter rang around the hall and he had obtained the attention he sought. Sybil turned from her dancing and, with a charming curtsey, asked for the pleasure of the dance. Surprised, the man rather sheepishly accepted. They danced well together and, as they circled the floor, he started a polka. Sybil followed, the floor was cleared, and the bystanders enjoyed watching their steps. At the end, everyone applauded. For a few moments at least her new partner had felt a sense of belonging which he rarely experienced.

Thus, between the years 1926 and 1932 we see Sybil spending her time between Lac Vert and rented homes in Margo, Invermay or Jansen (when Dr. Jacobson returned there to re-open an office). Before Lac Vert had become the focal point for her artistic endeavors, Sybil had endured life away from painting for a few years until the children were old enough to leave with their father, whose office was located in a part of the house. When Johanna and Tiggi required less help and attention, for several years she left home each April and returned in late August or September with a number of small, easily carried canvases upon which she had painted outdoors with so much pleasure. Sybil did not drive a car, and this remarkable artist may have hiked as many miles or more than Emily Carr in her well documented travels. Sybil loved the Tisdale, Nipawin, and the Lyons family and Mr. And Mrs. Messenger and at the home of Mrs. Winnifred Hayes in Nipawin. A number of other friends would also look forward to seeing her during the good weather.

Johanna recalls vividly how her mother waited impatiently for spring: "Mum was like a penned bird, once spring neared. When the Chinook began in early February I can always remember Mum standing by the window, gazing out in space, beating a little rhythm with her hands at her sides, restless and quiet. She could no more resist that pull and absolute compulsion to get away and paint than a bird could resist migrating."

When Sybil returned in the late summer she would stretch her canvases, make frames and

then take some of her new works to be exhibited either at the annual Provincial Exhibition in Regina or at an exhibit at the Memorial Art Gallery in Saskatoon. Sometimes she would attend both events. Then she would return home from the city with a suitcase of material to be sewed by hand into clothing for the family during the winter. Throughout the cold weather she was never completely away from her painting, as she would paint still lifes and occasionally landscapes from memory. Some of these she called pot-boilers and must be considered as only slight works. Nevertheless, they were small original works of art which could be purchased for about $10.00, bringing satisfaction to the buyer and some groceries to the artist's table. As Arthur Lismer remarked about Frederick Varley, "Keeping the pot boiling without a single pot-boiler was quite a task.

Johanna sensed that her parents were not always happy, although they did not quarrel, and she also realized that their intellectual interests were poles apart. Sybil was an idealist and a dreamer. Dr. Jacobson saw life as a difficult struggle, with so much hardship everywhere in those early days, and he keenly felt his responsibility for the care of the sick. However, both parents enjoyed the children and shared hopes and dreams for their happiness and success.

Johanna recognizes that her father must have been lonely at times, although she was not aware of any resentment on his part during her mother's long absences. Looking back, Johanna can see that her mother placed value on her artistic freedom. This was something that she had always been able to take for granted up until the time she met Dr. Jacobson. It was only then that she departed from a life that had been spent almost completely in artistic pursuits, even on that dreary homestead.

Johanna has suggested that, since Sybil was then technically her father's mistress and not his wife, he may from a practical point of view have accepted the fact that she had greater control over her own life. He may have never really understood Sybil's drive to be creative, but he was proud of her and wanted her to be happy. He often referred to her as a "great lady" and admired her fortitude and determination. She very sincerely admired his skills as a physician and had the greatest confidence in him as a parent. The Jacobsons did not hire a housekeeper during the months that Sybil was away and it is obvious that Dr. Jacobson took a great deal of responsibility in the home at those times. A woman would come in to do the washing and to stay with Johanna and Tiggi when their father was making house calls, which were often at some distance in the country.

Both parents always provided the children with an unassailable feeling of security. It is apparent that they thought of themselves as a strong and permanent family unit, in spite of difficulties and personality differences. Johanna feels that she and Tiggi were very much protected when they were children. There seemed to be genuine tolerance between the parents and there was never the feeling that criticism was being held back behind strained, tight lips. Sybil never by the slightest gesture, expression or remark alluded to the fact that Dr. Jacobson had a problem with alcohol. Looking back, Johanna is amazed at how discreetly the problem was handled by her mother. Therefore it came as a shock to Johanna about 1933 when they were living in Moose Jaw and she saw her father intoxicated, incoherent and weak. He had crawled up the stairs to their apartment and she was stunned by his appearance. Although Johanna guessed at the reason, the children dared not ask. It was Christmas Eve and she remembers holding back her tears and singing in the church choir with a lump in her throat.

It is particularly during the time the family lived at Jansen that Johanna remembers the stimulating guests who would be welcomed in their home. Long and interesting conversations would ensue about politics, the state of the economy and other subjects that are always of concern to the adult world. She recalls also the times when her father's Icelandic friends would be passing through town. Sybil would prepare dinner for their guests and then would later leave them to their talk. Johanna and Tiggi were lulled to sleep by the rise and fall of the conversation that would go on in Icelandic for many hours.

During the winter the heavy snow would soften the lines of the austere prairie architecture. Eaves on peaked roofs would be camouflaged by the rounded edges of snow and the stark false fronts on stores would be topped with a white mantle. Fortunately, too, the ruts of the clay streets were covered and smoothed by winter, with the snow's skillful paving. Thus, during the long winter months when Sybil was at home with her family, the landscape was usually calm and peaceful.

Before Sybil left on her painting expeditions in the late spring there were the brilliant new greens of the poplars and willows popping out everywhere, and the shortening days which sent her home still basked in autumn splendour. We cannot wonder that this artist rejoiced in finding much greater beauty in the lakes and streams and woods than ever existed in those emerging settlements. Beauty was her inspiration and the human spirit is often happiest when inspired.

Johanna remembers her father with great admiration and respect, also. The years have brought to her new insights into his needs and aspirations which were not as readily understood by her when she was a child in the home. She recalls that he was always even-tempered until the pain in his eyes developed with he onset of glaucoma. Then at times he became a little severe, but he still showed considerable control.

Johanna remembers Dr. Jacobson getting up early in the morning and the Persian cat resting on his shoulder as he revived the fire and started breakfast. The children loved the French toast he made. He spanked Johanna only once when under great stress. Their cat had been cruelly killed and then thrown on their doorstep. Johanna kept saying, "What's wrong, what's wrong?" Her distraught father grabbed her, spanked her, and then sat in a chair and wept.

Johanna accompanied her father on many distant house calls and each enjoyed the companionship of the other. She had practically memorized all his medical textbooks and hoped to become a doctor, too, but the depression and the family's financial situation made that impossible.

It was while practicing medicine in Jansen that Dr. Jacobson finally came to realize that he would have to retire because of his failing sight. He was increasingly in great pain and one eye had been removed at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

Johanna feels that, when an early teen-ager, one night she was almost shocked into instant adulthood. She was suddenly called upon to help her father in medical emergency.

Two sons had brought their father to Dr. Jacobson's office and the patient required immediate treatment. He had been operating a circular saw when a piece of wood had splintered off and lodged in his forehead, smashing the bone above his eye. Johanna ran across to a meeting at the town hall where Dr. Jacobson was on the platform with the reeve. For some time Dr. Jacobson had been trying to keep hidden his rapidly advancing blindness. On the way to the office Dr. Jacobson calmly told Johanna that she would have to assume the major responsibility.

Reaching the patient, Dr. Jacobson asked the relevant questions and Johanna gave him her accurate observations. Under her father's guidance Johanna cleaned and sewed up the wound and fortunately it healed amazingly well. Johanna was deeply disturbed and ashamed as she realized that the community should not be served by such a handicapped doctor.

Soon after that emergency Dr. Jacobson made the decision to retire and he was honored by the townspeople of Jansen with a heartwarming farewell party.
The tributes paid to him were unmistakably sincere and left no doubt as to the affection in which he was held.

It was only with the beginning of the depression that Johanna and Tiggi began to feel that their parents had financial worries. However, Sybil's correspondence with Mr. Cameron during 1926 and 1927 clearly reveals that she was very hard up and at times did not even have money with which to buy paints. Yet those were relatively prosperous years in Saskatchewan. When she was so desperately short of money at Lac Vert, was it because her pride and sense of fair play made her determined to finance the studio on her own, since being there meant that she and Dr. Jacobson were sometimes apart for a considerable period of time? Was Dr. Jacobson not able to assist her more in maintaining the alternate residence because he was still supporting his first wife? The children of the first marriage would be adults by then, but we do not know when their mother died. We should also consider the possibility that Dr. Jacobson may have resented Sybil's absences even though such a feeling never became apparent in any way to either Johanna or Tiggi.

This also raises the question of why Dr. Jacobson moved so frequently. His stays in both Margo and Invermay were relatively short. Was alcoholism part of the reason? Johanna has commented that these decisions were probably made while she and Tiggi were sleeping soundly in their beds. The children did not seem to find the moves unsettling. Most doctors practicing in the province at that time earned a comfortable living. Then, with the onset of the depression, the Government of Saskatchewan formulated the Municipal Doctor Plan and Dr. Jacobson became a salaried municipal doctor with a guaranteed minimum income, along with many of his associates in the medical profession.

With Dr. Jacobson's imminent retirement Sybil realized that in the future she would be the sole support of the family. The year was 1932 and the country was deep into the depression. In 1929 the Canadian Census listed the population of Moose Jaw as 21,000, and it was to this small city that Sybil decided to move.

Sybil would now be too far away from Lac Vert, but the decision to sell Corner Porch was a heartbreaking one. As she left Lac Vert on the train for the last time she concealed her tears in the washroom, which afforded a little privacy.

3. Moose Jaw

When Sybil arrived in Moose Jaw with Johanna and Tiggi she rented an office in the Hammond Building for a studio and it was there that the family lived illegally with only a sink and hot plate. They shared the floor's only washroom with other tenants during the day.

By the time of this move, much of the laughter had gone out of their lives, but Johanna remembers well those sounds of mirth in the earlier years.

I do remember our laughter . . . . . When Mum was home, sometimes after we were all in bed, Mum would call out some limerick which would challenge us. We would come up with punch lines - they had to be original. I can remember hopping up and down in bed, hugging myself with excitement in the effort to make the best, most captivating lyric. Then would come Mum's laugh.

Mum's laugh set us all off and was endearing to others, as well. Old friends would spend time with her and remark, "Jo, your mother has had us in tears with laughter all afternoon. She's priceless!" But it was a side not many were aware of . . . . One of her most outstanding characteristics, which was startling to strangers, was her outrageous sense of humour.

Life in the Hammond Building could not have been very comfortable for their parents, but the children thought it was an ideal lifestyle in its simplicity. With only a hot plate, meals were simple. Sybil, Tiggi and Johanna (when she was not away at school) slept on the floor on quilt pallets which they could roll up during the day and store on end in the closet. Dr. Jacobson, when he joined them after his retirement, had a cot. The children enjoyed the freedom from their share of housework. Johanna remembers that their meals consisted of tea and toast, fruit, vegetable and cereals. Meat was rarely purchased wherever they lived.

Sybil had a mother's natural desire to provide her daughter with the opportunities she had enjoyed during her own youth in England. For financial reasons, this in many respects was impossible. However, Sybil never gave up easily on anything that she considered to be important. After the move to Moose Jaw she was able to arrange for Johanna to attend St. Chad's, the Anglican School for Girls in Regina.

Later, when financial circumstances became too difficult to enable Johanna to continue at St. Chad's, Johanna spent some time with her father in Jansen and then enrolled in the high school in Tisdale. At first she stayed with her mother's close friends, the Lyons, and they later arranged for Johanna to live with Mr. And Mrs. Messenger in that town. Sybil found time to paint a portrait of Ida Messenger to repay her.

Sybil had been one of the ten founding members of the Women's Art Association of Saskatchewan. The Moose Jaw Women's Art Association had held an exhibition of her paintings at the Grant Hall Hotel in October, 1930. Thus Sybil was well-known in art circles in Moose Jaw when she moved there in 1932. Her work had also attracted considerable attention at the Provincial Art Exhibition held in Regina in the fall of 1930. An unidentified newspaper clipping dated October, 1930, (probably from the Moose Jaw Times-Herald) reports that the Saskatchewan Government had purchased her large painting of the Legislative Building to hand in the Premier's office. The painting had been undertaken in 1929. More that fifty years have now passed and the Saskatchewan Legislative Library, the Saskatchewan Archives Office and the

Inventory and Artwork Section of the Department of Government Resources have no knowledge of the whereabouts of the painting at the present time.

The Jacobson paintings in the exhibition at Moose Jaw in 1930, as reported in two unidentified press clippings, consisted of:

Gold and Silver This portrait is described by the newspaper reporter as "a life-size portrait with the material of the gown, fan and other accessories being shown up in a masterly wealth of silver and golden tints." This is the large portrait of the barber's wife, in which the painting of the gold satin dress, the fan and the model's silver hair was emphasized.

In the Wheatfield This painting is described as depicting "A wheat field in the middle of harvest - the figure of a Doukhobor woman, clad in the cap and gown of her people, stands out as she raises a water bottle to her lips. There is a sombreness even in the abundance of harvest as this woman from foreign shores gleans in the fields far from her native environment."

It is regrettable tht this painting has not been located, as it may be the one Johanna remembers which reminded her of the famous painting, The Gleaners, by Jean Francois Millet (one of the leading painters of the French Barbizon School of the nineteenth century). As will be shown later, Sybil's admiration of the Barbizon painters is clearly evident in her work. The description of In The Wheatfield provides the only record we have of a human figure being depicted by Sybil in an outdoor setting.

Down by the Creek (Plate 8) This painting was presented to the Moose Jaw Women's Art Association by the Art Committee of the local Council of Women in 1931. The painting was acquired by the Moose Jaw Art Museum in 1968.

Autumn's Glory This painting was purchased by the Moose Jaw Women's Art Association in 1930 and was also acquired by the Moose Jaw Art Museum in 1968.

Nunc Dimittis This painting is described as "depicting an aged woman who had reached the allotted span of life, the impression being given that she alone remained of her connection (family), yet her expression was one of resignation and peace, with possibly anticipation of release." "Nunc dimittis' relates to the first words of the Song of Simeon in Luke 2:29: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word . . ."

This was one of Sybil's favorite paintings. Johanna remembers it well and recalls that the old woman was reading her Bible by the light of a candle or oil lamp. The model was a German lady who used to call Sybil "Frau Herr Doctor's wife." Sybil brought this painting with her from Winnipeg to Vancouver in 1936. A former art student remembers seeing it in Sybil's Vancouver studio in the late 1930's and recalls that Sybil crated it to send somewhere in the east.

Study of an Old Woman In the press clipping, this painting is described as "a portrait of a Dutch woman, past middle age, her toil worn hands being devoutly clasped in devotion." Could this be the painting titled Supplication which is now in the collection of the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery?

Opening Waters This painting had recently been shown at an exhibition in Toronto.

Also exhibited were: Evening, The Golden Month, Springtime, Eddying Waters, The Hillside, The Dryad's Dell, Stooks, Indian Summer, Marsh Lands, The Pathway, September Snow, The Road by the Lake, The End of the Trail, Melting Snows, The Inlet and Winter's Lingering Touch.

The second press slipping relates that Sybil gave a brief talk after being introduced to

those assembled"

Mrs W.A. Beynon . . . introduced Mrs. Sybil Jacobson, who, in a very intimate manner, spoke of "Art in its relationship to ourselves." She claimed that the interesting of one's self in any branch of art, be it brush or pen, had a tendency to widen the intellect and infuse a new and better viewpoint of life.

Art has been said to be the language of the soul, and so Mrs. Jacobson felt that the cultivation of an interest in art was a reaching out for expression of one's self . . . . She encouraged her listeners to make an attempt in some line of expression as the appeal of nature was present in every one. In this endeavour, Mrs Jacobson recommended them to study the work of great artists and learn to value the distinct color and atmosphere of each. Through this they would obtain a true value of color . . . . Mrs. Jacobson concluded her remarks by reciting that poem of Kipling's "When Earth's Last Picture is Painted," in a very effective way.

The titles of the paintings in this exhibition indicate the vast extent of Sybil's wanderings throughout the
Province of Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, only the locations of two of these paintings (Down by the Creek and Autumn's Glory) are now definitely known.

A copy of a clipping from the Regina Leader-Post (undated except for the year 1931) reviews the fall exhibition of the Women's Art Association in Regina. Sybil's landscape Sunset Across the Lake was shown at that time. The review mentions that she had exhibited in Toronto "during the summer."

In the fall of 1932, when Sybil was settled in her studio at 312 Hammond Building, she held an At Home to mark her studio opening. A copy of a press clipping is again probably from the Moose Jaw Times-Herald (November, 1932). The reporter noted, "Possibly the portraits were the most outstanding and striking in their effects." The following paintings were listed:

Henri Lajouie (Plate 9) This is a portrait of an elderly priest from Trois Rivieres, Quebec, whom Sybil met in Saskatchewan. The painting was purchased in 1933 by the Moose Jaw Women's Art Association for $50.00. It is now in the permanent collection of the Moose Jaw Art Museum.

Pont Neuf Sybil painted this famous bridge when she was a student in Paris and Johanna remembers the painting well.

The Lady in Grey This is a life-size self-portrait which had previously been exhibited at the Memorial Art Gallery in October, 1925.

Picture Hat This is a portrait of the artist's daughter with her doll. Johanna recalls sitting for this study when she was about six years old.

Senorita This painting is not described.

Portrait of Helainie Baillie Sybil painted the portrait of this young lady from Moose Jaw in a single sitting. Miss Baillie is now Mrs. Helainie Johnstone of Ottawa. She was a model for Jacobson several times and on one occasion was dressed as a Spanish girl wearing a shawl. Possibly that painting is the one titled Senorita.

Lofty Pines This was painted at the confluence of the French and White Fox rivers.

At Sunrise This landscape was painted near the bend of the North Saskatchewan River.

Through the Trees No description is given.

Big Quill Lake, Wynyard This lake scene was painted while the artist lived in Wynyard

during the early 1920's. The lake's southeast shore is not far distant from the town. The painting had previously been exhibited at the Memorial Art Gallery in October, 1925.

Storm Clouds No description is given.

One of Sybil's special friends in Moose Jaw was Mrs. Hannah Cave, who was a very accomplished weaver. She was self-taught and had a natural talent for design and color. Sybil and Mrs. Cave met through the Moose Jaw Women's Art Association. On one occasion Sybil exchanged a painting for material from Mrs. Cave's loom and as a result of this happy circumstance she was able to make Johanna and herself lovely coats. The Weaver's Art (Plate 10) is a painting of Mrs. Cave seated at her loom, which is masterfully shown in intricate detail. Mrs Cave is dressed in a Japanese kimono, although she expressed to Sybil her feeling that a Prairie weaver would not be "decked out" in a satin robe. Probably Sybil was thinking more of the overall effect of the colors. Mrs. Cave's wishes did prevail, however, when she insisted on the removal of a little wisp of hair that had been painted falling over her forehead. After all, she was not untidy! Over the years the painting was a focal point in Mr. And Mrs. Cave's home and it has remained in the family's possession.

One of Mrs. Cave's nieces, Isabel Olson, remembers watching all the stages of the painting as Sybil worked, from the first charcoal outline to its completion. This work was undertaken in 1932 or 1933. Mrs

Olson also recalls being i Sybil's studio and seeing a self-portrait of the artist and a portrait of another Moose Jaw artist, Paul Wong. She remembers Johanna and Tiggi and recalls that Tiggi was in "frail health." She was happy to be included when she journeyed to Regina with her aunt and Sybil to attend Joahanna's confirmation at St. Chad's School.

A number of Sybil's former art students in Moose Jaw still reside in that city. Mrs Vaughan Grayson Mann, a well-known Saskatchewan artist, studied portrait painting under her. She has described Sybil as "a talented, gentle lady."

In spite of all her enthusiasm and hard work, Sybil continued to find it very difficult to make a living in Moose Jaw. Her decision to move to Winnipeg in 1934 was a desperate one. In Moose Jaw during those depression years there were very few people in comfortable economic circumstances who could afford to buy works of art. The business economy there was almost completely tied to agriculture, where cash incomes were negligible.

Although Sybil was leaving Saskatchewan primarily for economic reasons, it was a decision that many Saskatchewan artists made in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's. Louise Walters, in the catalogue published by The Saskatoon Gallery and Conservatory Corporation in conjunction with the exhibition Major Saskatchewan Artists held at The Mendal Art Gallery in 1975, describes the sense of isolation that was so prevalent:

Prior to the sixties, leading Saskatchewan artists felt obliged to leave the province in order to identify themselves with the functioning art scene. It was an unwritten law. Many of the artists devoted their prime energies to teaching, the result being the sacrifice of their own personal endeavors. Main contact with the outside art world was dependent upon inadequate color reproductions. Artists were isolated, insulated and they were hungry for communication. This isolation must have been particularly difficult for Sybil, who had enjoyed so much the artistic milieu of England and France.

Sybil, who had known Augustus Kenderdine in Saskatoon, was leaving Saskatchewan two years before the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops had their beginnings. In 1936, when Kenderdine moved from Saskatoon to Regina college, he persuaded the University of Saskatchewan to develop his property at Emma Lake (north of Prince Albert) as a summer school for the arts.

At last Saskatchewan artists had the opportunity to work and study together, but this opportunity had finally arisen at a time when Sybil was facing widowhood and leaving the Prairies. For other Saskatchewan artists, however, their long period of isolation was gradually opening up to artistic trends in eastern Canada and in the United States. Ultimately, there resulted a greater communication between representational and abstract artists.

While struggling on alone, Sybil was nevertheless receiving warm praise, both as an artist and a teacher, particularly during her time spent in Moose Jaw when her work seemed to attract considerably more attention. The favorable press clippings have been noted. The problem of isolation and lack of criticism from other professionals is discussed with clarity by Nancy E. Dillow in the exhibition catalogue Saskatchewan: Art and Artists published at the time The Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery and the Regina Public Library Art Gallery mounted this exhibition, April 2 to July 31, 1971.

A problem for all creative arts in a pioneer or young community such as Saskatchewan is the relative intellectual and physical isolation. The limited opportunity to share interests or receive enlightened and sympathetic criticism frequently results in a deterioration of talent and a disproportionate reaction to uncritical praise. Such a situation caused artists, such as Henderson, to remain upon a plateau from which they might otherwise have risen. In addition, others, principally teachers who enjoyed a position of respect and pre-eminence in the community, suffered from uncritical praise as well as a lack of stimulus through contact with their peers. These remarks seem appropriate when applied to Sybil in attempting to evaluate the negative factors which may be seen as stumbling blocks to her continued development as an artist. The "critic as cheerleader" is not often truly helpful.

4. Winnipeg

Johanna was still in school in Tisdale when her parents and brother arrived in Winnipeg. Once again a studio home was rented in an office building (the Arts Building). Unfortunately, the artistic isolation seemed to continue for Sybil in Winnipeg, even though she was new geographically close to the Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Winnipeg School of Art. At that time most serious students of art would undoubtedly be drawn to the well established Winnipeg School of Art rather than seek instruction from a private teacher. We have no knowledge that Sybil had any contact with Lemoine FitzGerald who became principal of the Winnipeg School of Art in 1921 and who had been invited to join the Group of Seven in 1932, a year before the group disbanded.

However, Sybil no longer felt intellectually isolated after her arrival in Winnipeg. Through her friend, Molly Lyons, she met Mr and Mrs Harry E. Wilder had been appointed superintendent of the Jewish Orphanage.) They, in turn, introduced Sybil to a wider circle in the Jewish community. A number of young intellectuals, for the most part in their early thirties, started coming to Sybil's studio for informal discussions on literature, drama, philosophy and the visual arts. This provided a stimulating exchange of ideas which she had missed for so long.

Sybil received a number of portrait commissions from Jewish patrons. Among her portraits of this period was a painting of Miriam, the Wilders' daughter. It is disappointing that not one of these portraits of this period was a painting of Miriam, the Wilders' daughter. It is disappointing that not one of these portraits commissioned in Winnipeg has been located. We know that, among her subjects, were a number of male heads of Jewish families. With her many years of academic training, Sybil was very familiar with the techniques employed by Rembrandt in his paintings of the Jews of the seventeenth century, and she was mindful of his famous paintings as she undertook those commisssions.

Soon after her parents and brother arrived in Winnipeg Johanna decided to join them there. Looking back, Johanna sees herself at that time as a rather self centered teen-ager who simply added to her mother's
Problems. Tiggi, however, was a steady lad who delivered newspapers (on an old bicycle that was always breaking down) and enjoyed boxing lessons and other boyish pursuits.

Once again, Sybil's enterprise and selflessness came into play and she somehow produced a piano for Johanna. Later, in return for many hours spent making a copy of an original old master painting, Sybil was able to arrange for Johanna to take voice lessons.

In spite of the commissions that Sybil was able to obtain, the family was still very much impoverished, but she refused to apply for relief. Johanna admired her mother's independence but felt that a few coins in her father's pocket might have brought him a little pleasure. There were times, as Johanna or Tiggi would be taking their father for a walk, when even a cup of coffee in a cafe would have been an enjoyable diversion from his daily routine.

Dr. Jacobson's elder daughter (Johanna's half-sister), Mrs. Louise Sigmar, was living in Winnipeg, Dr. Jacobson had previously stayed with her on two occasions when returning to Saskatchewan from the Mayo Clinic. Now, occassionally, either Johanna or Tiggi would walk with him to Louise's home and he would visit there for two or three days. Louise would be pleasant when she came to the door, but she had no interest in establishing a relationship with her

half-sister and half-brother. During this period in Winnipeg Dr. Jacobson suffered a slight stroke from which he had no serious effects.

Shortly after her arrival in Winnipeg, Johanna found employment doing housework. She walked a considerable distance every day to her work, with cardboard lining the worn soles of her shoes. Most of her clothes were secondhand.

In Jansen, Dr. Jacobson had attended the Lutheran Church where services were conducted in German, and Sybil attended the Anglican Church where possible in those small prairie towns. Now, in Winnipeg, the four Jacobsons attended All Saints Anglican Church. It was there on Nov. 27, 1935, that "John (Johann) Sigurdir Jacobson, Doctor - retired, widower (age 63) and Sybil Henley, Artist, widow (age 54)" were married by The Reverend William Askey - License No. G 52799.

Johanna and Tiggi attended the quiet ceremony and Johanna remembers it as a happy family occasion. The Jacobson family managed something quite special that day. They went to a restaurant for hot chocolate before returning home.

Johanna, in her letters, has commented several times that their family's life style was somewhat unusual but it is apparent that neither Sybil nor the children at the time thought of it in that way. It may seem extraordinary to read of the wedding and not assume that the young teen-agers asked questions and that the parents gave some explanation. Such was not the case. For the young people it appears to have simply been a special day, full of goodwill and optimism.

Why the parents decided to marry at that time will probably never be known. Research has proven fruitless in efforts to determine how long each partner had been free to marry. Doubtless, Dr. and Mrs. Jacobson realized that their years together were slowly drawing to an end, as Dr. Jacobson was noticeably failing health.

As his sight continued to fail, Dr. Jacobson became more and more isolated from social contacts. The Jacobsons did not have a radio or gramophone and the hours of the day began to seem increasingly long to
Him. Most of all, he missed practicing medicine and helping people. Especially in those days, the relationship of a family doctor with his patients was often a particularly close one and there was nothing to fill the vacuum created by his forced retirement. He now felt very keenly his dependence on his family. It was less than a year later that Sybil reached the nadir of her life. Dr. Jacobson died on July 3, 1936.

Sybil had, of necessity, somewhat accepted the fact that her husband was losing ground physically. At his death there was not only her great loss to face but also the knowledge of how empty his life had become. With her bereavement came also her own sense of personal failure.

In spite of all her efforts and work, Sybil felt that she had barely been able to supply even the creature comforts to her family. Their intellectually gifted Johanna seemed to have avenues of further education closed to her. Nothing would have pleased Dr. Jacobson more than to feel that Johanna would follow in his footsteps in a medical career. Sybil surveyed her long years of study and discipline and realized that, after so much effort, she could do little more than put bread on the table for those she loved. In her sorrow and self deprecation she negated her more personal gifts of love, understanding and loyalty. Only Tiggi's needs seemed uncomplicated. He was no longer frail, had no particular career aspirations and seemed perfectly content until the death of his father.

Johanna vividly recalls her mother's anguish at this time and feels that Sybil almost broke down, both physically and mentally. She decided to move to Vancouver and once again she was embarking on an entirely new experience and putting a distance between her old life and the new. There was not sufficient money to ship the fine pieces of furniture which Sybil had brought from England so many years ago. Although she had always possessed a good business sense, in her distraught state she left the Persian rug, sideboard, mahogany library table with can inserts, and walnut Windsor chairs, which had always formed the nucleus of their home furnishings, with an auctioneer, and she failed to get a receipt. She received little payment for the consignment.

On a number of former occasions when the Jacobsons were leaving Lac Vert for a time, Tiggi could be seen sprinting out of Corner Porch carrying the rolled rug under his arm when he hard the train whistle a mile from the station. He would always arrive at the depot nearby in time to place the rug in the baggage car and then board the train with his family. There were a great many memories associated with those household objects.

Sybil had never learned to drive but did manage to buy a used car. Tiggi (now almost fifteen and very protective of her) could drive it, though probably illegally. An old family friend from Lac Vert came to Winnipeg to help in the drive west.

Johanna decided that she would remain in Winnipeg for a time, as even a job at housework was not easy to obtain, and it seemed unwise to give it up. As always, Johanna had considerable self-reliance and this stood her in good stead when unexpected difficulties arose shortly after her mother and Tiggi left Winnipeg. Sybil had found Johanna a room to rent and left her with the piano, a bed and other furnishings. At the thought of leaving her, Sybil very much felt a mother's natural concern for the young girl who would soon find herself alone. Canon Askey looked out for Johanna, as did other friends, and before long Johanna joined her family on the west coast. With an improvement in economic conditions, opportunities began to come her way in which she could use her intellect and initiative to advantage. She is presently a regular contributor to a western Canadian magazine.

The only painting which has been located in Winnipeg from this era is a lovely head and shoulders portrait of Johanna at the age of sixteen. Noting that the painting is only 14 inches by 11 1/2 inches, one is very much impressed with the painterly qualities of the study.

5. British Columbia

When Sybil arrived in Vancouver she was newly widowed, fifty-five years of age, emotionally shaken, physically tired and almost without funds. As Johanna pointed out, "By then a lot of her drive and confidence had probably seeped away." Tiggi keenly felt his mother's distress and was thoughtful and supportive. He attended vocational school until the following summer and then signed on as a cook on a fish boat when only sixteen. Arriving at the west coast, this Prairie boy soon found that the ocean held a fascination for him. Perhaps this is not surprising, as his paternal great grandfather had sailed on a whaling ship off Greenland.

Sybil had not come to a hospitable economic environment, especially for artists, when she arrived in Vancouver in 1936. The British Columbia College of Arts, organized by Frederick Varley and Jock Macdonald in 1933, had been forced to close in 1935. Varley, which was then a somewhat isolated settlement on Vancouver's North Shore. Finally, a purchase of one of his paintings by the National Gallery enabled him to go east.

Like Sybil, Varley had been born in England in 1881 and both artists came to Canada in 1912. As John Bentley Mays has pointed out, Varley had "put an ocean between himself and the most vivid creative movements of his time - The School of Paris, German Expressionism, The Russian "avante garde"." This applies equally well to Sybil, Varley's contemporary. The considerable and lasting recognition that Varley eventually achieved in the history of Canadian art is clearly demonstrated in the exhibition, F.H. Varley; A Centennial Exhibition, a major retrospective mounted in 1981.

In 1936 Jock Macdonald had taken a part-time teaching position in Vancouver at the Canadian Institute of Associated Arts in the Dominion Bank Building at Victory Square. The following spring he became serious ill. Fortunately, the Vancouver Art Gallery purchased a painting and he was able to take a trip to California in the fall when he had sufficiently recovered.

Thus, the year after he arrival in Vancouver, Sybil secured the position left vacant by Macdonald. She taught classes in Drawing, Composition, Story Illustration, and Portrait and Landscape Painting. It was a great disappointment to her when the school closed a year later because of financial difficulties. Sybil was also for a time in the late 1930's associated with a small art school located in Vancouver's West End.

Meanwhile, Sybil was still painting in her careful, traditional academic manner and continued to remain just on the edge of serious recognition. Opportunities arose to exhibit in the annual B.C. Artists' Exhibitions with artists who were beginning to be recognized across Canada. She took part in these exhibitions in the years between 1937 and 1940 and again in 1945 and 1946. When Sybil first participated in 1937, Emily Carr and J.W.G. (Jock) Macdonald were among the exhibitors. In 1940, Jack Shadbolt, B.C. Binning, and F. prendergast were listed as artists taking part. In 1946, the last year that Sybil entered her work in the annual exhibition, Lawren Harris exhibited also.

Selected for the B.C. Artists' Exhibition in 1937 was Jacobson's Lilacs ($100.00). This work is not to be confused with her painting, similarly titled, in the collection of the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery. The latter is now in poor condition - stretch marks show on the canvas, the pigments have darkened and color values have been lost. In 1939, Sybil exhibited As

Summer Wanes ($25.00). In 1940, On the Brow of the Hill ($20.00) was shown. In 1945, La Juanita ($100.00) and Christmas in Toronto ($35.00) were on view. The latter painting was executed when Sybil spent eight months with her son in Toronto after his return from overseas. (Tiggi had been invalided home with rheumatic fever.) The 1946 B.C. Artist' Exhibition Catalogue lists one Jacobson painting, The Old Log Cabin ($75.00). This painting depicts the cabin where Sybil lived for a time on Lynn Creek in the community of Lynmour on the north shore of Burrard Inlet. Duck are in the year. No other birds (or animals) are known to have been painted by her. (Plate 11)

The autumn, 1947 issue of Canadian Art (Vol. 5, No. 1) contains an article (name of author not given) titled "Directions in British Columbia Painting." In this evaluation of the contemporary art scene in British Columbia in the 1940's, four groups of painters are examined:

If one could strike a cross section of the art activity of any country, one would probably find three distinct groups of practising painters, and possibly a fourth. First, a large number of pure amateur "painters for pleasure" who exist everywhere. Secondly, a body of academically trained professional painters - landscape specialists, portraitists, who live by sale of their work, or by private or school teaching, and who belong to established art societies. Some of these are quiet, sound and even sensitive artists but they add nothing original to our tradition....

A third section is composed of those temperaments seriously concerned with the exploratory rather than the facile approach to art; and, while they may exist in fierce independence, they usually respect true creation where they find it and their respect often unites them in sympathy. At times they group together for mutual growth and protection.

A possible fourth stratum would include those rare true primitives who have retained a virginal and naive approach and whose work offers us pure joy.

Although Sybil's approach to art could never be considered "facile," therein may lie an explanation of why she did not achieve more notice and success in the art world. Sybil was not exploring; she was not innovative to any considerable extent. Clearly, the second category is the one to which she most closely belonged. Although Emily Carr had been strongly influenced by the Fauves during her period of study in France in 1910 and 1911, Sybil, about the same time, had seemed to remain unaffected by the furor over the new artistic trends. For the realistic landscapes and portraits which Sybil wished to create, her conservative, representational style would continue to serve her best. She was predisposed by both training and temperament to follow this path and she always painted with consideration for good taste.

Her response to the avante-garde is very much what we might expect of a young, academically trained artist of that era. The year 1910 had seen the first Post Impressionist Exhibition in England. Many of the English artists and art lovers reacted very negatively to this new art, to which the French (and Sybil) had already been exposed. Had Sybil remained in England for a longer time after the beginning of that second decade, she might have begun to modify her approach to art. Instead, she arrived in Saskatchewan. There, without artistic stimulus of any kind (except the natural beauty of the area), it is not surprising that her work remained somewhat static. We should remember, however, art critic Christopher Hume's observation that "Not even originality rates above excellence."

In retrospect, there was little hope of Sybil joining in the artistic mainstream in British Columbia. There she was overshadowed by the more established reputations of some of the

painters already on the art scene. She was almost thirty years older than both Jack Shadbolt and B.C. Binning. They were attracting attention beyond the borders of British Columbia and their interest in abstraction was already established. Varley was experimenting with radical colors in his portraiture and Macdonald was immersed in his experiments which he called "modalities."

If Sybil had come to British Columbia earlier we might have seen a change and adaptation in her landscape painting technique. Emily Carr's British Columbia forests, which appear to "approach and engulf" and at times to even threaten, required the stronger colors which Carr employed. Sybil's landscape style continued to show an affinity with that of the Barbizon painters.

The fact that Sybil was in her own way re-creating in her paintings the "Barbizon mood" is, of course, not unique to the American and Canadian art scene. As Peter Bermingham, curator of education at the Smithsonian Institution's National Collection of Fine Arts, has pointed out in American Art In The Barbizon Mood (published in 1975), the Barbizon art style became a standard of taste in the United States that lingered well into the twentieth century. He has outlined both American and Canadian painters who transplanted the Barbizon idiom to America. These painters, through their trips to Europe and their contacts with other painters, came under the Barbizon influence and commenced seeing and interpreting the landscape in the Barbizon manner. Their influence continued from the mid-nineteenth century on into even the middle of the present century.

The Canadian artist, Horation Walker (1858-1938), who was born in Ontario and died in Quebec, came to be referred to as "The American Millet." Another equally impressive Canadian who painted in the Barbizon mood well into the 1930's was Homer Ransford Watson (RCA).

Absent from Jacobson landscapes are the small human figures and animals often present in the works of Jean-Baptiste Corot. However, in paintings by Theodore Rousseau, another Barbizon painter, one can expect to find fewer animate forms. In the Jacobson canvases we do not see farm homes or barns in the distance nor do we see a grain elevator, which would so definitely affix a prairie stamp to the scene. In that respect, her landscapes are not particularly regional. One does not usually sense the intrusion of man in her work. One exception is the untitled landscape (Plate 12) in which we see a boat drawn up on the bank of a creek. This boat is remarkably similar in appearance to small boats appearing in a number of paintings by Rousseau and Corot, except for its flat, rather than pointed, stern. In the Jacobson landscapes Down by the Creek and Woodland Pool (Plate 13), the yellows and greens of the forest carpet and trees suggest a remembrance of the palette employed in some of Rousseau's paintings.

Quite frequently in Barbizon paintings of undisturbed wooded areas one notes horizontal branches extending from one side toward the center of the canvas and we may see, in the central foreground, areas of grass or shallow water. A taller group of trees at times stands out in contrast to a smaller clump opposite. As this compositional style is frequently seen in Jacobson landscapes, we are again reminded that Sybil was indebted to the Barbizon spirit. She perceived with a "Barbizon eye" and seemed to seek out, probably unconsciously, certain compositional arrangements particularly pleasing to her. Her three landscapes in the Moose Jaw Art Museum, Autumn's Glory, Down by the Creek and Stoney Creek (Plate 14), as well as Woodland Pool, reflect a similarity to the Barbizon style and are particularly reminiscent of certain works of Theodore Rousseau, who is famous for this forest interiors. Sybil felt a keen response tot he

mystery and majesty of woodland enclosures.

Sybil also enjoyed painting still lifes and had a definite preference for flowers (Plate 15 and 16). Some of her work may remind one of the paintings of Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904), who is one of the most famous painters of flowers in the history of art. His work was well known to Sybil and he exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy when she was in England.

In the 1940's Sybil found a ready market for her flower paintings at John Britnell Art Galleries Limited in Toronto. This firm has been established in Canada since 1884. Mr. Robert Britnell remembers Sybil very well. She would occasionally come to the gallery when she was in Toronto and he enjoyed their chats. Her floral paintings always sold very well and he would have customers waiting for them. Sybil would mail the rolled canvases in cylinders from British Columbia and the gallery sold them for $25.00 to $35.00, plus the cost of framing. Mr. Britnell described Sybil as "a charming, cultivated lady, a real master of art." However, it has been established that it was not at this gallery that her paintings were shown at least twice in Toronto in formal exhibitions.

At the same time the Britnell gallery was handling a number of the works of John Beynon, Kenneth Forbes and Archibald Barnes. Mr. Britnell feels that Sybil's work was of equal stature. Kenneth Keith Forbes, born in Toronto in 1892, was a famous Canadian portraitist, having painted such famous personages as R.B. Bennett and John Diefenbaker. He resigned from the Royal Canadian Academy in 1959. Archibald Barnes was born in England in 1887 and attended the Royal Academy Schools in London. He also became a portraitist and is represented in the national Gallery of Canada. John H. Beynon was born in 1890. He is noted for his realistic landscapes and one of his paintings was acquired by the National Gallery. Here again, we see Sybil on the edge but not in that charmed circle of well established artists.

Only one portrait painted by Sybil in British Columbia has been located. It is titled Clair de Lune and the model is a young lady who had been one of Sybil's students in Vancouver in the late 1930's. She is seated at a piano and moonlight shines into the room.

Sybil's portraits were never casually undertaken - she had far too much respect for people. In observing her portraits one is not surprised that she was a pupil of John Singer Sargent. Sybil continued to adhere to her representational style and her portraits did not tend to become probing psychological studies. This suggests her admiration and respect for her distinguished teacher, as well as similar point of view.

Richard Ormond, in his book John Singer Sargent Paintings. Drawings. Watercolours. Has said: "The Royal Academy was in many ways a natural resting place for Sargent, who, as developments in modern art increasingly alienated him from the avante-garde, was to become one of the last outstanding exponents of a formal representational tradition."

Keen observation, polished technique and detachment are qualities often observed in Sargent's work. He would indicate the outline of the figure first with charcoal and he rarely executed preparatory oil studies. Throughout her painting life, Sybil continued to employ similar methods in portraiture.

6. Sybil Jacobson's Last Years

Although many facts and dates have already been lost or obscured with the passage of time, a rather complete picture emerges of this remarkable lady. The compulsion to paint, so well documented in the lives of so many painters over the centuries, remained with her all her life. In the article "Unfettered Realism" by Frank B. Edwards in the Charter Issue of Equinox Magazine (January/February 1982), Canada's well-known wildlife painter, Robert Bateman, has been described as "a compulsive painter, working every day and becoming restless when he must spend extended time away from his work. He seems driven and says that his motivation to paint is almost a disease . ..." Sybil, too, felt almost driven. For Sybil, as with so many women artists, there was an added complication to that disease. This was the necessity to try to effect some kind of workable balance between two compelling forces which were pulling her in opposite directions - her compulsion to paint and her love and concern for her family. How Sybil dealt with that problem is part of the story of her life.

Sybil was almost sixty by the time that conflict was resolved in a natural way, with the emerging maturity and independence of her daughter and son. Although economic times had improved, financial insecurity would continue until a year before her death. This was always the greatest hurdle in her "obstacle race." At the age of seventy, Sybil may have applied for the small Old Age Pension of $20.00 per month, which was available only on the basis of a means test. However, once again her pride may have prevented her from doing so. Then, in 1952 the Old Age Security Act was passed by the Parliament of Canada, paying a universal pension at that time of $75.00 per month to every Canadian citizen age seventy and over. This was a most welcome event toward the end of her life.

If Sybil had been an artist in the United States during the depression years she might have known less hardship. There, the United States Government's WPA Federal Art Project kept many artists from abject poverty. Painters like Alice Neel, the famous portraitist, were paid a small weekly wage to create paintings for public buildings and Neel has described this project as "a great creative venture."

As she became older, Sybil began to worry increasingly about finances and actually began to occasionally consult a fortune teller, perhaps hoping for some sign of future improvement in that area. She kept busy, remaining active with various projects, and never complained, but she was not always able to push back the fear of dying alone. So much that she wanted in life had evaded her, but she was mercifully spared what she had come to almost dread.

During the earlier years when Sybil had a studio it was also, of necessity, her home. Particularly in Lac Vert, all summer long she would have streams of visitors who stayed for hours. People obviously liked and respected her and some treated her with a certain deference. After their mother's death, Johanna and Tiggi received many letters of sympathy. Of particular interest is a letter from a friend in Naicam, Sas. "She was a very wonderful woman and although she and I were not alike I could get such a thrill out of visiting and associating with her." During her years in Canada, Sybil wqas for the most part meeting people who had come from very different backgrounds from hers. Many sensed this, but Sybil's warmth and interest bridged the gap.

A friend from North Vancouver wrote, "Her mind was so honest as well as her deeds, and

she had the greatness of true humility. She was a dear and lovely person and she has left dear and lovely children."

When she chose to do so, throughout her life Sybil could look like a duchess. One classmate of Johanna's at St. Chad's School remembers seeing Sybil when the mothers were being entertained by the school. Most of the students there were from fairly affluent families, but Johanna's mother is remembered then as being striking and fashionable in appearance, standing out in a very favorable and refined way. No-one would realize that her ensemble had probably been put together from imaginative purchases at a Salvation Army Thrift Store.

On everyday occasions Sybil was often somewhat eccentric in her dress. Johanna remembers how she felt about this:

Mum was at times completely oblivious to her appearance but, though I longed many times to have a nice, neat, starched mother, I never said anything. There was a trusting vulnerability in her that made it difficult. I couldn't tell my Mum she dressed in an unusual manner because on other occasions she looked so completely smashing and became so queenly in carriage and poise. Some may have laughed at her but most respected her integrity and character.

I never saw her in a cotton house dress or an apron, ever. She would make a rather dressy dress for a special event (perhaps an exhibition opening), wear it on a few suitable occasions, and then start to wear it even for such things as hiking and hauling lumber. All her good dresses became every day dresses. She didn't possess such a thing as a sensible suit.

Over the years, Sybil carried on much correspondence about art and she kept in touch with her two sisters, Lucy and Constance, in England. She was never able to see them again, after coming to Canada.

The only letter that remains from Sybil to Johanna was written on December 30, 1943, when Sybil was living in Saanich, on Vancouver Island, near Sevenoaks post office. It is an affectionate letter, written just as she was getting over influenza, expressing loving thoughts for her granddaughter, Stephanie (Neffy), and for Johanna (Do-Do) and Tiggi. Sybil had been in Victoria that day. She mentions Netffy's photo on the radio.

I went downtown to-day and tried in every store to get some mitts for Neffy ... Honey, I shall think of you on New Year's Eve, and hope you have a very nice time ... Your cake is grand and I am listening to the
Radio and drinking a nice cup of tea and thinking my Darling, of you. Sometimes I feel terrible at being so far away .... Did you get your Sat. Eve. Post? I also got the new Women's Home Companion today and it is a good number .... Darling, I wish you all possible happiness in 1944. Come at Easter and Neffy, too. Kiss Tiggi for me. Write to me soon, Sweet. I love you so. Don't forget me.

At this time, Johanna's husband was overseas. Johanna was working in Vancouver and bringing up their daughter alone, so she was not able to go over to Vancouver Island very often. Sybil remained on Vancouver Island very often. Sybil remained on Vancouver Island for two or three years.

During the last decade of her life, Sybil moved frequently. In 1944 she was residing at 613 Kent in Victoria. She began to buy small, modest bungalows in which to live. She would usually create a lovely English garden and would even do a little carpentry, reminiscent of the

time in Saskatchewan when she would attempt almost anything that needed doing. Then she would move again. There was little profit, if any, from these real estate transactions. The reasons that lay behind these moves were probably her restlessness and her need to be creative and see things improved.

We know that in the early 1940's Sybil lived for a time at 3011 Frances St., in Vancouver. In August, 1940, when living at that address, she applied for a National Registration Card which would allow her to enter the United States on visits. She had friends in Seattle and on Whidbey Island in northwest Washington State and enjoyed going to that island to paint. At other times she lived on Vancouver's North Shore and in the Municipality of Surrey, just beyond New Westminster. In October, 1952, Jacobson sold her house at 579 West 25th St., North Vancouver, and in September, 1953, she purchased a home at 144 Timberland Rd., in Surrey, for $3,500.00. Her equity in this was transmitted to Johanna after Sybil's death in November. Her signature on business documents continued to be "Sybil Henley Jacobson."

During the years that Johanna and her husband were bringing up their four children, they lived in Vancouver. Tiggi lived in Vancouver for a time and later moved with his family to Deep Cove. In her later years, Sybil would visit Johanna about every ten days and this usually meant a somewhat involved journey. Generally, wherever she lived, Sybil would walk to a bus stop, have a fairly long ride, including a transfer, and another walk when she left the bus. Although she rarely mentioned it, her back bothered her, she had developed a slight limp, and intermittent claudication at times made walking painful. These visits were always a joy to her and to Johanna and her family.

Of Tiggi's four sons, only the eldest, Thomas, has any recollection of his paternal grandmother. Three of Johanna's children remember their grandmother well: Stephanie (born 1939), Mark (born 1945), and Ruth (born 1947). Sybil had also enjoyed her grandson, Riley, who was born in 1950. One of Tiggi's younger sons, Darryl Jacobson, is very much interested in the study of art and has begun to sell some of his paintings.

Living alone, Sybil usually had a wood stove and she chopped her own wood. She never owned a refrigerator or icebox. She purchased only as many groceries as she could carry home. She enjoyed her tea, stewed apricots and Hovis bread and the salmon that Tiggi caught and Johanna canned for her. For guests she often prepared delicious roast chicken and bread sauce. Her life-style had remained simple for a great many years now.

The lady who at times seemed so glamorous always remained very real. She wore flannelette nighties, braided her hair at night, used Ponds cold cream and like to wear earrings. When she suffered from migraine headaches she would like in a darkened room with a cool cloth on her forehead. She felt tremendously relieved when her son and son-in-law returned from the war. When she could no longer walk into the woods or even see quite clearly, the flowers brought inside still provided pleasure and challenge as she continued to paint still lifes. She never lost her almost child-like quality of seeing fresh, exciting beauty in accustomed sights - wild roses, morning dew, sunrise and sunset. And the smell of turpentine was never absent from her home!

The last painting that Sybil completed is a floral study of hyrangeas. Sybil commented that she could then only see masses of color, rather than much detail. (Plate 16)

On November 4, 1953, undeterred by the rain, Sybil arrived to have another pleasant visit

with Johanna. At times like this, Johanna seemed just as English as her mother, as the two good companions had a special tea. They talked of Tiggi and wondered how long it would be before he returned from the Bering Sea where he halibut fishing. When Sybil was leaving and had gone out the door, Johanna called her back and tied a woolen muffler around her head and shoulders. They laughed about the reversed roles - the daughter seeing that the mother was warmly attired.

That night Tiggi arrived back in Vancouver. Before going on to his own home, he dropped in to see his mother. Sybil was so delighted to see him. She was already in her dressing gown and she put the kettle on for tea. They talked about Tiggi's trip, while she sat with her feet up on the rungs of the chair, enjoying his visit. She rose when the kettle began to sing and collapsed in Tiggi's arms. Sybil died instantly at the end of a happy day spent with both her daughter and her son.

It was artist and newspaper art critic, Mildred Valley Thornton, who wrote Sybil's passing for the Vancouver Sun. Thornton had begun her own artistic career in Saskatchewan, before becoming so well-known in British Columbia. In the early 1950's she had initiated a vigorous defense of representational art, which she felt was being neglected by a "modernist clique" at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Sybil was among the traditional artists whom Thornton admired.

Since Sybil's death in 1953 her works have been exhibited on two occasions. In August, 1966, an exhibition was held at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon in conjunction with the Memorial Art Gallery. Both Reverie and Early Morning were shown at that time. In the next decade (1971) the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery and the Regina Public Library Art Gallery held the exhibition titled Saskatchewan: Art and Artists. For this exhibition, Supplication was chosen.

Possibly the finest work to again command attention is The Black Shawl (Cover), a self portrait has not been publicly exhibited for more than fifty years. We know from Sybil's correspondence with Mr. Cameron that it was shown in October, 1925, at the Memorial art Gallery and another reference states vaguely that the painting had been on tour. Although The Black Shawl is own privately, it has recently been possible for several art historians to view color photographs of this exquisite painting and it has aroused much interest and praise.

It is astonishing to realize that Sybil at this stage of her training had not yet reached the classrooms of the Royal Academy Schools. The portrait reflects her knowledge of the Dutch masters of the seventeenth century, especially the portrait traditions of Rembrandt and Van Dyck. The colors are Rembrandtesque, particularly the background tones. The style, notably the intricate white collar, and the pose are in the Van Dyck manner. The beauty is her own. This painting, and the portrait Reverie, may well be the bench-marks against which will be measured any Jacobson works yet to be re-discovered.

Although we have seen Sybil through the memories shared by Johanna, as well as through correspondence, this magnificent self-portrait has much to convey to us, as well. Such a work may be the most direct revelation of self that an artist can leave to future generations. We see Sybil's consummate grace in bearing and gesture, serenity, self-confidence, and perhaps a quiet reserve - a young woman who already knew herself but did not yet know where she was going. We are fortunate that she came to us.

Although Sybil Jacobson did not outlive the revolution in abstraction, her art has survived it and should no longer be obscured by once dominant artistic trends. Some of her works are of

surpassing quality.

Canadian art critic John Bentley Mays has recently state, "Today, we are able to see the lost continent of realism rising like Atlantis from the sea ..." Now, when an appreciation of representational painting is again on the rise, this is a time for reappraisal of the art of Sybil Jacobson.

Afterward

Johanna, where were you that summer afternoon in 1931 when I accompanied my parents to your mother's studio at Lac Vert? It was fifty years later when I telephoned you. I wish we had met!

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Alexander, Mary, G.
Sybil Jacobson: Painting in the West
Toronto, HMS Press 1984
Review by Sybil James, Women s Art Journal

As a child, Mary Alexander met Sybil Jacobson (1881-1953) when her family purchased one of Jacobson s paintings. Years later, Alexander became interested in learning more about this artist whose work had long been a part of the family household. Learning more was not easy. Though several galleries and museums in Canada hold Jacobson s work, their catalogues provided little biographical information, and some that was inaccurate.

Eventually, Alexander, with the assistance of Jacobson s daughter, Johanna, gathered enough information to create this short biography. That much of the material is based on Johanna s memories accounts for the lack of information about the artist s early life. Born Sybil Atkinson into a comfortably middle-class family in London [GB], she studied art there and in Paris, where she met her husband, Peter Henley, a sculptor and painter estranged from his prominent English family. In 1912 the couple went to Saskatoon to try homesteading. Why they did this is not explored. They were not successful farmers, and Peter suddenly became violently insane, was hospitalized, and died soon after. Aside from such sketchy details, the story does not really begin until 1918, when Sybil went to live with Dr. Johann Jacobson, whose own first marriage had failed.

From there the story is one of her efforts to paint and care for her family, of struggles and frequent relocations in search of some sort of financial security, and of the difficulties in finding artistic and intellectual stimuli in small prairie towns.

For several years, Sybil managed to leave whatever town the family currently lived in to spend the spring and summers painting in the countryside around Lac Vert. Dr. Jacobson (whom Sybil did not legally marry until 1935) seems to have been atypically accepting her need to paint. (Johanna postulates that since for so many years her mother was technically her father s mistress and not his wife, he may from a practical point of view have accepted the fact that she had greater control over her own life - an interesting argument for the status of mistress.)

The lack of information applies also to the whereabouts of many of Jacobson s paintings: often we simply get descriptions of them based on press clippings from exhibits or Johanna s memories. What we do have corroborates Alexander s assessment: a careful, traditional academic manner - and well done, but not innovative. Although she studied with John Singer Sargent and his influence is felt in her portraits - the lighting and color in the self-portrait on the cover makes us wish that some of the book s 16 reproductions were in color - she is primarily a descendant of the Barbizon School.

Jacobson remained *on the edge of serious recognition*, according to Alexander, who places the artist s struggles for financial security and recognition in the context of the difficulties of other Canadian contemporaries. Although the narrative is sketchy and grows a bit disorganized at the end, and the lack of an index makes cross checking difficult, Alexander has given us a sense of this strong, determined woman, rescued from obscurity. The book seems a stepping stone to interest others in Sybil Jacobson s work and to lead someone to undertake a full-length study of her place in the history of Canadian art.

Sybil Jacobson: Painting in the West
Mary G. Alexander. HMS Press, Toronto 80p. 16 plates
Review by Cheryl Meszaros (unk) Summer 1985

The artist s biographer inevitably confronts both the myth that tends to be associated with the artist and the mystique of the creative process. If the biographer s approach is sympathetic and respectful, the artist and the art itself are apt to be set up for popular veneration. Mary G. Alexander s book on the Saskatchewan painter Sybil Jacobson (1881-1953) is an instance of this process.

The book belongs to a genre of biography motivated by personal experience. The seminal inspiration, in this case, was a painting by Jacobson, in the Alexander family collection. The author s enthusiasm was fostered by a youthful visit to the artist s home in Lac Vert, Saskatchewan, in 1931. Much of the biographical information, too, was delivered from a very personal source, the artist s daughter, Johanna. Hence, a very intimate portrait of the artist is presented to the reader.

There is an impressive compilation of Jacobson s paintings and their provenance; and with Johanna s assistance, Alexander has been able to reconstruct the chronological sequence of Jacobson s life. Seldom, however, does the author synthesize this material into a coherent picture os Sybil Jacobson, the person in relation to the artist. Jacobson s movements to and across Western Canada on the other hand, are admirably documented: from the early years of art training at the Lambeth School of Art and Design in England and the youthful enthusiasms of the Prairie years, to her death in 1953 on the West Coast.

Corresponding changes in her artistic productions are either neglected or dealt with only in passing. In fact, the paintings are relegated to the status of so many inscrutable works dropping down pure, personal, and uninterpreted. Pictures, we are given to believe, must flow quite naturally from one who is an idealist and a dreamer.

The chapter entitled *Rural Saskatchewan* evokes the legendary institution of prairie perseverance and ingenuity. Sybil and her two children, the author relates, *thought nothing of walking six miles on a fine day to the lumber yard in Naicam and carrying back on their shoulders a small load of lumber (for Sybil s studio, Corner Porch) chatting happily all the way.* It is in this manner that the conception of the persistent woman artist echoes through a labyrinth of anecdotal facts. Early prairie art and artists will continue to suffer their provincial status if accounts of their achievements are colored with the inessential, and treated in such a topical manner.

The author does place Jacobson s landscape paintings fairly and correctly in the tradition of the Barbizon painters, and includes an informative passage on the technique of plein-air painting used by the artist. On the other hand, the radical change between Jacobson s early society portraits (e.g. *The Black Shawl,* circa 1902, and the later, more humanistic portraits, e.g. *The Spinning Wheel,* circa 1927) is attributed to her memory of a Vincent van Gogh exhibition. Might there not, perhaps, have been a more direct relationship between the new, crude, and yet penetrating style of Jacobson s Canadian paintings and certainly less elegant life on a homestead in Saskatchewan? Similarly, we hear little of the influence local painters may have had in

stimulating this stylistic change. Reflections on such matters would have helped to de-mythicize the art and the artist.

Alexander s research has yielded many valuable facts; but their significance and their relationship to larger issues are neglected. For instance, Sybil Jacobson was one of the ten founding members of the *Women s Art Association of Saskatchewan*. It would have been enlightening to discover who the other nine members were; how and why the association was formed; and what relationship it has to the revolutionary act of admitting female students into art classes at the Royal Academy in London. Information such as this would go a long way in establishing the sources and evolution of Canadian art and would help to illuminate, rather than mythicize, the painter s life.

Alexander, Mary, G.
Sybil Jacobson: Painting in the West
Toronto, HMS Press 1984, 80p. $6.95
Review by Carrie Gardner Canadian Women s Studies XIV/1 January 1986

For many years women artists have been excluded from the world of art history and, if included, have been trivialized for their lack of techniques or for their choice of subject matter. We now se their re-emergence in all fields of artistic endeavour; in monographs, essays, ad collected works. It is a delight to include this small volume in their midst.

Sybil Jacobson is notable not only for her persistence in painting in a realistic style when this was not popular, but for including painting in a life fraught with personal difficulties. Sybil too, felt almost driven. For Sybil, as with so many women artists, there was an added complication to that disease. This was the necessity to try to effect some kind of workable balance between two compelling forces which were pulling her in opposite directions, her compulsion to paint for her love and concern for her family. How Sybil dealt with that problem is part of the story of her life.

This short volume is well researched and places Jacobson and her work in the early history of the West. It is with great meticulousness in research that the course of her life and work is traced. A valuable asset to our heritage of women artists.

Alexander, Mary G.
Sybil Jacobson: Painting in the West
HMS Press, 1984, 80p. $6.95
Review by Ellen Pilon CBRA 1984

Born in England, Sybil Jacobson (1881-1953) moved to Saskatchewan with her first husband in 1912. From around 1918, after the early death of her husband, Sybil lived with Dr. Jacobson, with whom she had two children and with whom she eventually married (1935). Her art credentials include studying at the Lambeth School, three years at the Royal Academy Schools (where one of her teachers was John Singer Sargent), and a few years in Paris. The 14 black and white reproductions of her paintings included in this book suggest she had considerable talent. Yet she is virtually unknown as a Canadian painter. In her penultimate chapter, Alexander tries to place Jacobson in the Canadian art scene and to appraise her art. Although talented, Jacobson remained Barbizon and static at a time when art movements elsewhere were anything but traditional.

Included in the book are an informative author note, contents, acknowledgments, a list of plates, and a selected bibliography. The selected bibliography lists very general works on art, nothing on Jacobson in particular and nothing suggests where Alexander obtained her material. The acknowledgments offer a few clues: Jacobson s daughter, Johanna Christy, *without whose unstinting cooperation this book could not have been completed* , seems to have been the source of much of the information. The List of Plates provides title, medium (all are oils), size, and owner for the paintings. There is no list of Jacobson s paintings, although within the text the contents of several exhibition catalogs are recorded. Alexander has not seen all of the paintings and has not been able to locate many of them. No page numbers are given in the List of Plates, an inconvenient omission.

Alexander has gathered some interesting biographical information on Jacobson, mostly subjective observation of her daughter Johanna, but her organization and presentation of this information are deficient. The text is choppy, with tidbits whimsically tossed in here and there. For example, in a paragraph discussing the B.C. Artists Exhibition of 1937 we learn that Tiggi (her son) returned from overseas, invalided home with rheumatic fever. There is no reference to Tiggi s travel overseas, why or when he went or in what way he was invalided home with rheumatic fever. Similarly, Dr. Johnson is mentioned, then forgotten, then mentioned again in such a way that the reader does not know whether he is dead yet, just sick, or living elsewhere. Chronology is confusing throughout, compounding the problems posed by the choppiness. Some of the comments are remarkably trite: noting that the painting is only 14 inches by 11.5 inches, one is very much impressed with the painterly qualities of the study.

Although the book offers some useful biographical information on an obscure and forgotten Canadian artist, it is too dull, lifeless, and confusing to interest biography buffs.